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AUTHOR Jordan, Edwina
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ABSTRACT

For a community college business communication teacher, a whole new world has opened in her field and in her city, a city which has changed from a major industrial economy to a service economy. The changing environments require adjustments for class size and location (to retrain laid-off mature workers), in types of examples and vocabulary buzzwords teachers use, as well as in professional attitudes and development. Flexibility and the need for preparation led business writing educators to establish links with the corporate community, address the needs of life-long learners, attend professional as well as local seminars, work together to gain new perspectives (e.g., with part-time faculty of different disciplines), be honest with self-assessment, put to practice what they teach (personal writing), make choices leading to fundamental changes, and involve people at all levels. The list continues as educators attempt to keep up with the process of change. Teachers and departments, however, are renewed through their efforts to effect change. Coordination and concentration lead to revitalized energy. (KEH)

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Edwina Jordan

Title: Where Teacher Training Never Treads

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Introduction

Flexibility and innovation are the keys to effective teaching. As teachers in the field of business communication, we have found that the vocabulary buzzwords have changed in the last ten years. We have gone from the office to the workplace, from the businessman to the generic business executive. A whole new world has opened to us in the teaching of business education. We were not prepared, but we were flexible--we enrolled in seminars, reviewed textbooks, visited companies, colleges, and offices that were turning to the modern technology.

In the Peoria area, changes were taking place rapidly from a major industrial city to a service city. We were making headlines. The changes called for massive layoffs and as a result of those layoffs, training. The community college became the headquarters for training these laid-off workers. And to some extent many of the workers that were laid off began to make transitions, and they called on the community college too. This was our new student. Were we prepared to teach this new mature adult? What new skills did this person need and what did we do? There are three areas that we are going to discuss; one is the community, one is what is what happened at the college, and one is what we did for renewal.

CS212600

Active role in the educational community

Member of the scholarship community with the university

Public media board

State Board of Education task force committee

Seminars for government officials

Tutoring grade school and high school students one night a week

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At Illinois Central College there is a Speakers' Bureau, and the Speakers' Bureau is a community-based program for faculty to renew skills of workers, office staff, and government officials.

Skills of writing

Letters

Grammar

Basics of business communications

Listening

Speaking

Writing

Reading

The Speakers' Bureau gives the college a chance to provide a service for the community. When we were planning a recent seminar, we had the opportunity to rethink some of the basics and give our effort to the organizational skills, prepare for the audience, use AV materials, and prepare handouts appropriate for the group's goals. These were some of the things that we were teaching our students that we were actually doing.

Are we working in the business? Is the business similar to an educational institution? Is an educational institution similar to a business? Links with the corporate community are also some of the things that we do in the community. We recognize and serve the educational needs of hundreds of people already in the work force today. In our experience with a Fortune 500 company located in Peoria, we went to the office.

Companies in the area encourage and reward employees for seeking additional education and improving their skills.

Renewal to the community is something that all workers must do. This is life-long learning. In what ways have we failed to meet these challenges? How have we changed because of demographics? This is where the college comes in. In the college, in my own particular interest, I have had release time to pursue interests in electronic publishing and diversity in faculty. At present I am teaching at the Urban Center. I have taught in the factory setting. This was all the connections that the college had. We had all our assignments to change--this is renewal. I am a professional reader for the Educational Testing Service in Princeton.

Part II: The Search for the Fountain of Youth

Unfortunately we could not go to Florida, but we could find rejuvenation in the class right here in Peoria, so we decided to take classes. The college offers free tuition to faculty.

Foreign language

Robotics

Technical Writing

Children's Literature

Pedigogy of Writing

Word Processing

Some of the courses were taken for enlightenment.

Creative Writing

What's New in Publishing

Teaching Excellence

Photography

As I teach in the Urban Center, I find renewal in changing environments and work with part-time faculty of different disciplines. We have had some of our students teaching problems in approaches to teaching; and this has helped me as a teacher to see what some of the problems are that they have. We've had to make adjustments for our class size, the types of examples that we use, and our professional attitude has changed.

Part III: Research and Academia

In the January, 1990, College Board Newsletter, Nancy Perry Associate Editor of Fortune magazine called for a new generation of partnerships between schools, colleges, and business.

For two semesters at my college, I have been an active researcher for projects and a special released time professional development program entitled "Independent Development Project." I completed a project on electronic publishing from a novice point of view--in the voice of the college searching for the right system. This term I am completing a project on recruiting in the English Department for faculty with diverse backgrounds.

I have been renewed by meeting many new people, and through these grants, I attended conventions on a national and local level, went to commercial business shows on electronic publishing, and wrote reports and articles. I have been appointed to college committees to study the projects, and I have written surveys.

Part IV

Writing is a skill we teach and a skill we practice, so what can we do to become more proficient writers? How can we explain the writing task to our

students if we don't practice? We are sharing our ideas. At least once a month we are writing our ideas.

Keeping a list

Writing notes

Creating new assignments

When we taught at the factory, we had to rewrite assignments, again, focus on our audience, and anticipate the goals our students were trying to achieve. To keep our classes updated, we review videotapes and films; do a great deal of reading in professional journals, business journals, composition journals, and research projects; and we are forever clipping magazine and newspaper articles. In a recent seminar on professional development for teaching, Dr. James Easton, the Director at the Center for Teaching and Learning at Southeast Missouri State University, stated that professional development workshops on excellence in teaching provide the environment for active learning and listening. How was I trying to keep my students listening? This was one renewal session where I felt that I needed to have some new teaching strategies. Dr. Easton provided a list of business references that explain active learning with visual aids, computer learning, case studies, class discussions, debates, field trips, library assignments, and performance in writing skills. I felt renewed after that session. This is just one of the released time day-workshops that the college provides. In another journal that I read from, Normal Illinois Alumni Letter, MoCo Corporation Chief Executive officer Richard Marrow states, "The biggest single change facing corporations in the next several years will be the number of minorities and women coming into the work force." If companies are beginning to plan for the future, what is the college doing? Whenever I review

textbooks, I think about the examples and illustrations that authors use. Are they appropriate for the student entering the work force? I need to involve people at all levels of a company for more team effort.

So, what do I do when dealing with job stress? Well, for several semesters, I have taken classes. It helps. It's a different situation sitting in a classroom.

Some of our department goals for this semester and the fall semester is to study how we can build critical literacy skills among students. The second goal was to increase hours of composition for students' use in open computer labs. From the 1989 edition of the Teaching Professor, a newsletter, one article compares teaching to the Jane Fonda Workout. As the course of teaching goes from year to year, we all get flabby. But by renewal and exercises that require coordination and concentration, Jane Fonda states that no two workouts are the same. Of course, we can say that no two classes are the same and that no two students are the same. We do get energy and a different state of mind, and it helps to go from things that are different. In that same newsletter, there are five steps to better teaching. This is because you care and that's a state of renewal, also.

1. Begin being honest with self-assessment. So what do I do, what do I do well?
2. Seek input. Seek input from colleagues and students.
3. Make choices. Change activities, collect ideas, observe others, observe teaching styles. And that's what I did when I went to these different classes.
4. Improvements of instruction are ongoing. Using visual aids and changing visual aids.

5. Seek input about alterations. Do some review and assessment of the changes. Make sure that you are committed to teaching.

Part V: What Did I Do For Myself

As I mentioned, the Jane Fonda workout corresponds to teaching, and certainly it is practical. We have a third-floor space where we can do a lot of walking. Well, that releases a lot of stress. There are a lot of different types of activities to get involved in. Some of the activities that I have found interesting are: recreational courses and educational courses. I also became a mall walker.

Conclusion.

Will I find the fountain of youth? Will it play in Peoria? I am always searching. I have been on the retraining track like the business executive and the line worker. I know robotics. I have taken a course in technical writing. I know computer language, I have taken a course in BASIC. I seem to be closer to the students. Are we bringing back this humanistic approach to teaching? Do they teach this in college? So I go from scholarship supporter to team builder, from educator to student, from speaker to conventioneer, from listener to grade school tutor on Tuesday nights. "Oh, the fountain of youth, where are you?"